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THE RESURRECTION AND THE NEW TESTAMENT: A FRESH LOOK IN LIGHT OF RECENT RESEARCH

JON PAULIEN
Loma Linda University
Loma Linda, California

Edgar Krentz makes a strong statement that is, nevertheless, not an overstatement: “If there is no proclamation of the resurrection, then there is no gospel, no church, and no Christian theology. The early church is the child of the resurrection.”¹ The resurrection in general and the resurrection of Jesus in particular are absolutely central to the message of the NT.² It is on account of the resurrection that Jesus the preacher became Jesus the preached.³ We can understand this theme best when we read the NT in light of the OT and the way it was understood in the Jewish context of the first Christian century.

The Jewish Context

Christian faith arose in the context of Early Judaism in the Greco-Roman World.⁴ Jesus himself was born and raised as a Jew in the Roman province of Syria/Palestine. The earliest Christian church was not distinct from the synagogue. Christians and Jews worshiped the same God, used the same Scriptures, frequented the same temple in Jerusalem, and were essentially one people.⁵ So it should not be surprising to discover that they held a similar view of the resurrection.

It is true that there were a variety of views on life after death in Early Judaism.⁶ But the “standard” view among Jews in the NT period was bodily

¹Edgar Krentz, “Images of the Resurrection in the New Testament,” *CurTM* 18/2 (1991): 98.

²Of the twenty-seven NT books, twenty-one speak about the resurrection of Jesus. Only James, 2 Thessalonians, 2 Peter, 3 John, Jude, and Titus do not refer to Jesus’ resurrection explicitly, although it could be argued that at least some of them presuppose it (*ibid.*, 99-100).

³*Ibid.*, 99, 102.

⁴James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SMC Press, 1991). On the meaning of the phrase “early Judaism,” see James Hamilton Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament: Prolegomena for the Study of Christian Origins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 59-62.

⁵Dunn, 18-36.

⁶John C. Brunt, “Resurrection and Glorification,” in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, Commentary Reference Series, 12 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 365-366; N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of*

resurrection of the dead at the end of the age.⁷ The view is widespread throughout the centuries preceding and following the first century, and was also widespread geographically.⁸

The diversity of views within Judaism did not, however, carry over into Christian belief.⁹ Instead, NT Christians oriented standard Jewish beliefs about the resurrection toward one main shift in understanding: “God has begun the eschatological process by raising the crucified Jesus from the dead.”¹⁰

God, Christian Origins and the Question of God, 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 129. There were dozens of options. It appears, as more ancient texts are discovered, that even more varieties of positions may come to light. Immortality of the soul, e.g., was clearly taught by Philo of Alexandria, who believed that the deserving dead lived on in some kind of nonbodily life. There is archaeological evidence that many other Jews of his day would have agreed with him, showing that the influence of Plato and other Greek philosophers was widespread in both Palestine and the diaspora (ibid., 140-146). The Sadducees, on the other hand, did not believe in an afterlife at all (see, e.g., Walter Brueggemann, “Ultimate Victory: Jesus and Resurrection,” *Christian Century* 124/ 3 (6 February 2007), 33; Benedict T. Viviano and Justin Taylor, “Sadducees, Angels, and Resurrection,” *JBL* 111/3 (1992): 496-498; and Wright, 131-140. It is possible that people of the NT period saw bodily resurrection as a revolutionary doctrine (ibid., 138) that had to do with the coming new age when the present system of things would be overturned.

⁷George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), 2:323; Wright, 146-200. Daniel Boyarin and Seymour Siegel note: “The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead enables righteous souls throughout history to have a share in the world to come” (“Resurrection,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica* [New York: Macmillan, 1972], 17:241).

⁸Wright, 147. Bodily resurrection of the dead is strongly attested in the martyrdom passages of 2 *Maccabees* 7 and 14, *Ethiopic Enoch*, and other early apocalypses (ibid., 153-162), the *Wisdom of Solomon* (ibid., 162-175), Pseudo-Philo 19:12-13, and the *Mishnah* and the Targums (ibid., 191-200).

⁹Markus Bockmuehl, “Complete History of the Resurrection: A Dialogue with N. T. Wright,” *JSNT* 26/4 (2004): 493.

¹⁰George W. E. Nickelsburg, “Resurrection (Early Judaism and Christianity),” in *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:688. As attractive as the idea has been for some scholars, the dying and rising gods of the ancient world were not the root of Christian belief in the resurrection. They are not even a true parallel to early Christian belief. Instead, the Christian belief is rooted firmly in the Jewish context. See Thomas L. Leclerc, “Resurrection: Biblical Considerations,” *Liturgical Ministry* 18 (Summer 2009): 101; Albrecht Oepke, “ἐγείρω, etc.” in *TDNT*, 10 vols. ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:335-336; Alan F. Segal, “Resurrection, NT,” in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Katherine Doob Sakenfeld (Nashville; Abingdon, 2006), 4:772; John J. Tietjen, “A Book Worth Discussing: *The Resurrection of the Son of God*,” *CurTM* 32/2 (April 2005): 96.

The Language of Resurrection

There are three primary words used to describe bodily resurrection in the NT: ἐγείρω, ἀνάστασις, and ζάω. Ἀνάστασις is the preferred noun for resurrection in the NT and ἐγείρω is the preferred verb.¹¹ The root meaning of ἐγείρω is “to awaken from sleep,” “to arouse,” and, of course, “to awaken the dead.”¹² All of these meanings are found in the Scriptures.¹³ The word is used for resurrections performed by Jesus during his earthly ministry (Mark 5:41; Luke 7:14; John 12:1, 9, 17) and the one that occurred in the context of the cross (Matt 27:52). It is also reflected in the Easter stories (Matt 28:7; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:34; and John 21:14). Paul uses the word with reference to the resurrection of believers, but the fact that is found in parts of Paul that echo earliest Christian traditions (Phil 2:6-11; Rom 1:3-4; 1 Thess 4:13-14)¹⁴ shows that it was part of the general teaching of the earliest Christian churches.¹⁵

The word ἀνάστασις is used in a variety of ways in the ancient Greek world. It is applied to the erection of statues and public structures, expulsion from one’s house, arising from sleep in the morning, and, in isolated instances, for an uprising or insurrection. Most of these meanings are not found in the NT.¹⁶ Instead, ἀνάστασις became the standard noun with which to express both the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead¹⁷ and of those who believe in Jesus when he returns at the end of the age.¹⁸ There is no evidence whatsoever that either ἐγείρω or ἀνάστασις were capable of expressing some sort of nonbodily survival after death.¹⁹

Ζάω, often shortened to simply ζῶ, generally means to be alive in a physical sense.²⁰ By extension, in the NT it can refer to the glory of the life to come, as in eternal life, and with reference to the sanctified life in the

¹¹Oepke, 2:335.

¹²Ibid., 2:333-334.

¹³Ibid., 2:334.

¹⁴See Nickelsburg, 5:688. These texts contain traces of early Christian creedal formulas, hymns, and other traditions.

¹⁵Albrecht Oepke, “ἀνίστημι, etc.,” in *TDNT*, 1:336; Nickelsburg, 688.

¹⁶Oepke, 1:372.

¹⁷Acts 1:22; 2:31; Rom 1:4; 1 Cor 15:12; Phil 3:10; 1 Pet 1:3; 3:21. It is not, however, used in the four Gospels to describe Jesus’ resurrection. Instead, the verb form of ἐγείρω is used—“He is risen.”

¹⁸John 5:29; 11:24; 1 Cor 15:21; Phil 3:11; Heb 6:2; Rev 20:5-6.

¹⁹Wright, 330.

²⁰BAGD, 3d rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 424.

present.²¹ But in the context of death, the term can be used inceptively as a return to life, another way of describing resurrection.²²

Different Kinds of Resurrection

It is helpful to begin a discussion of the NT evidence with a list of all the resurrections that are described in it in the order in which they occur:²³ (1) the resurrections that occur in the course of Jesus' earthly ministry;²⁴ (2) the resurrection of "bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep" in the context of Jesus' crucifixion (Matt 27:52, ESV);²⁵ (3) the resurrection of Jesus;²⁶ (4) the resurrections performed by the apostles (Acts 9:36-42; 20:7-10); (5) the special resurrection of witnesses before the second coming of Christ (Rev 1:7); (6) the resurrection of the righteous at the beginning of the millennium (Rev 20:5-6, cf. Luke 14:14; John 5:29; Acts 24:15); and (7) the temporary resurrection of the wicked at the end of the millennium (Rev 20:16, cf. John 5:28; Acts 24:15).²⁷

²¹Ibid., 425.

²²Ibid. In Rev 20:4, beheaded martyrs "came to life" (aorist indicative). In Matt 9:18, a ruler expresses faith that if Jesus would put his hand on the man's daughter she would "come to life" (future indicative). The word is also used with reference to the resurrection of Jesus in, e.g., Mark 16:11; Luke 24:5, 23; and Acts 1:3. According BAGD, ζάω is for the word "resurrection," which is used 14 times in the NT. Although it is not used as many times as ἀνάστασις, and ἐγείρω, it is used frequently enough to be of note. There is also a rare form of the word, ἀναζάω, which is found in variants of Rev 20:5 with reference to the resurrection of Christ. See Rudolf Bultmann, ἀναζάω, in *TDNT*, 2:827-873.

²³Brunt, 349, offers a helpful but incomplete list.

²⁴Mark 5:38-43 parallels Luke 7:11-17 and John 11:38-45, cf. Matt 10:8 and 11:5.

²⁵In the context of Jesus' death and resurrection, the passage makes sense as a fulfillment of the OT concept of the Day of the Lord. J. Berman Kline, "The Day of the Lord in the Death and Resurrection of Christ," *JETS* 48/4 (2005): 757-770. This was perhaps also a foretaste of the resurrection of all the saints. Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Re-Reading the Resurrection," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 16/1 (2000): 111.

²⁶David J. Norman, "Doubt and the Resurrection of Jesus," *TS* 69 (2008): 786-811. Norman offers a thorough discussion of the history of Jesus' death and resurrection. I do not attempt here to review the evidence or arguments regarding the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus; these are well covered by others. See Peter Stuhlmacher, "The Resurrection of Jesus and the Resurrection of the Dead," trans. Jonathan M. Whitlock, *ExAud* 9 (1993): 45-56.

²⁷Oepke, 1:371, proposes that the predominant view in the NT is that of a double resurrection—one for the righteous and the other for the wicked. Brunt, 348-349, notes that the wicked people's attack on the city in Rev 20:7-10 indicates their unwillingness to accept Christ's rule despite all evidence. They are then destroyed with Satan. Revelation is the only NT book to be specific about the difference in time between the

The core event among the seven is the resurrection of Jesus. All other NT teaching on the concept of resurrection is firmly grounded in the resurrection of Jesus.²⁸ This event is unquestionably attested in three of the four Gospels²⁹ and widely referred to in the rest of the NT, particularly in Paul. In the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, Jesus is not only the one who rises from the dead, but he is also the one who raises others from the dead.³⁰ His resurrection is the first-fruits of the general resurrection (1 Cor 15:20, 23); it is an eschatological event, the beginning of the end.³¹ Not only are the miracles of Jesus signs of the messianic age, but so is the resurrection of the dead at the end of the age.³² All Christian hope is based on the resurrection, as there is no natural human immortality.³³ Jesus' resurrection serves as an inauguration of the final events.

The Resurrection Body

What kind of body will resurrected believers have?³⁴ Will it be identical to the present body except in its perfection, or will there be differences? To answer these questions, it is helpful to begin with what the NT says about the resurrected body of Jesus.³⁵ Jesus appeared to his disciples a number of times over a period of 40 days after his resurrection (Acts 1:3; 1 Cor 15:5-8), but these appearances tended to be brief and often began and ended abruptly.³⁶

two resurrections (see Brunt, 355; P. G. Damsteegt, primary contributor, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe. . . : A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* [Washington, DC: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988], 358).

²⁸Nielsburg, 5:688-689.

²⁹Matthew, Luke, and John. Although the resurrection of Jesus is announced in Mark 16:6, the earliest manuscripts of Mark end at 16:8 without a clear description of Jesus' resurrection or postresurrection appearances. Later manuscripts include such information in vv. 9-20, the originality of which is uncertain on the basis of the textual evidence. See also Edward Robinson, "The Resurrection and Ascension of Our Lord," *BSac* 150/597 (1993): 9-34.

³⁰Brunt, 347, 352-353. Christ's resurrection assures believers that all the promises of God are reliable, even after death.

³¹*Ibid.*, 347-348; Oepke, 1:371.

³²Oepke, 2:335.

³³Brunt, 347-350.

³⁴This direct question is asked in 1 Cor 15:35. Paul's lengthy answer to the question is found in vv. 36-57. See Benjamin L. Gladd, "The Last Adam as the 'Life-Giving Spirit' Revisited: A Possible Old Testament Background of One of Paul's Most Perplexing Phrases," *WTJ* 71 (2009): 304-305.

³⁵In fact, the resurrected body of the believer will be like the resurrected body of Jesus. See Wright, 341, 348.

³⁶Brunt, 361.

In some ways, Jesus' body seems to have been different than it was before his death and resurrection.³⁷ He either passed through walls to enter a room (John 20:19) or he entered the room invisibly when the door was shut. In Luke 24:31, he vanishes suddenly out of sight while sitting at the dinner table.³⁸ He is recognizable, but not easily recognized (Luke 24; John 20:15; 21:4).³⁹ He lifts off the ground and ascends up into the clouds (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9-11).⁴⁰ Thus his resurrected body seems to have had powers that either were not available before his death and resurrection or that he chose not to exercise before these events.

The emphasis in the Gospels is on continuity rather than discontinuity.⁴¹ Both Luke and John seem eager to demonstrate that the resurrected body of Jesus was not a phantom or disembodied spirit, but that it was as real as it was before the crucifixion.⁴² Jesus' voice was recognizable, and it was possible to hold onto him (John 20:20, 27).⁴³ He did physical tasks such as cooking breakfast (John 21:9-12).⁴⁴ While the disciples on the road to Emmaus did not recognize him at first, Luke explains that it was because they were kept from recognizing him (Luke 24:16). Jesus even ate in their presence (Luke 24:43). However, the strongest support for continuity is in vv. 36-39, which explicitly rejects the idea that Jesus was some sort of disembodied spirit.⁴⁵ After the resurrection, it is the same Jesus, but his body has been transformed.⁴⁶

For the believer, likewise, there is continuity and discontinuity between the present body and the glorified resurrection body.⁴⁷ Discontinuity can be summarized succinctly: the earthly body is mortal and thus is subject to the

³⁷Gerald O'Collins, "Resurrection and New Creation," *Dialogue* 38/1 (1999): 16; Alan F. Segal, "Resurrection, Early Jewish," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Katherine Doob Sakenfeld (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 4:772. Paul seems to address this in 1 Cor 15:40-42.

³⁸Segal, 4:773-774.

³⁹Raymond E. Brown, "The Resurrection in John 20—A Series of Diverse Reactions," *Worship* 64/3 (1990): 199-200; Leclerc, 104; Eugene Peterson, "Resurrection Breakfast: John 20:1-14," *Journal for Preachers* 25/3 (2000): 15.

⁴⁰Leclerc, 104.

⁴¹Segal, 4:773-774. Michael Welker argues more for discontinuity ("Wright on the Resurrection," *SJT* 60/4 [2007]: 464-474).

⁴²Brunt, 361; Charles H. Talbert, "The Place of the Resurrection in the Theology of Luke," *Int* 46/1 (1992): 24-25.

⁴³Segal, 4:773.

⁴⁴Leclerc, 104.

⁴⁵Brunt, 361; Segal, 4:774; Talbert, 24-25.

⁴⁶Leclerc, 104.

⁴⁷Francois Bovon, "The Soul's Comeback: Immortality and Resurrection in Early Christianity," *HTR* 103/4 (2010): 401; Brunt, 361.

law of sin and death, the great enemy, while the resurrected body of the believer participates in Christ's victory over death and is immortal.⁴⁸

The passage that most directly addresses the problem of continuity and discontinuity is 1 Cor 15:35-50.⁴⁹ Here Paul uses an analogy of a seed to describe the similarities and differences between the present earthly body and the glorious resurrected body. The earthly body is seed-like. When buried in the ground, it comes forth a plant (1 Cor 15:37, 42-44). There is continuity between a seed and a plant, but there is also discontinuity (vv. 42-44, 47-49).⁵⁰ The earthly body is sown perishable, but is raised imperishable. It is sown in dishonor and weakness, but raised in glory and power. It is sown as a natural body, or as the Greek brings out, "soul-like"; it is raised a spiritual body, or "spirit-like."⁵¹ The first body is related to the first Adam, the man of the "dust"; but the resurrected body is related to the second Adam, the man from heaven. The difference, then, between the earthly and the resurrected bodies is precisely the latter's shedding of human mortality,⁵² meaning that the body is no longer subject to death (Rom 6:9) or vulnerable to dishonor and weakness.⁵³

⁴⁸Brunt, 361.

⁴⁹Note the second question in v. 35. Hans Conzelmann focuses mainly on the discontinuities in this passage (*1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. James W. Leitch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1975), 280-288.

⁵⁰Brunt, 362, is particularly helpful here. See also Conzelmann, 282-283; Stephen Hultgren, "The Origin of Paul's Doctrine of the Two Adams in 1 Corinthians 15:45-49," *JNT* 25/3 (2003): 366-370.

⁵¹Paul clarifies the terms "soul-like" and "spirit-like" in v. 45. He chose the term "soul-like" from Gen 2:7, where the original Adam is described as being made from the dust of the ground and becoming a "living soul" when the breath of God entered him. Thus "soul" in v. 44 represents the whole person, not just the mind or consciousness (see a second reference to Genesis 2 in vv. 47-49). The "spirit-like" resurrected body reflects the second Adam, who is a "life-giving spirit." The concept of a "spiritual body" as Paul portrays it would be a complete contradiction of a Platonic view of the immortality of the soul. Further, the concept of "spiritual body" is clearly not intended to express the material of which it is made. In Greek, adjectives ending in *-ikos* have ethical or functional meanings rather than referring to the material of which something is made (cf. Wright, 351-352). The two bodies are, therefore, compared and contrasted along the lines of the two Adams rather than mortal versus immortal. Cf. Segal, 4:772. For a detailed analysis of the allusions to Gen 2:7 and 5:3 in 1 Cor 15:45, see Gladd, 305-308.

⁵²Wright, 360-361.

⁵³Tietjen, 96-97. Why, then, does Paul say in 1 Cor 15:50 that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God?" Wright, 359, suggests that flesh and blood have here their ordinary meaning of corruptible, decaying human existence in contrast to the transformed, incorruptible body after the resurrection. It is not an expression of

Does Paul's contrast between the natural body and the spiritual body imply that the resurrected bodies of believers are no longer material or physical as they were before? The analogy of the seed and the plant argues strongly against this. The resurrected body is spiritual; however, not in the sense of being disembodied or nonphysical, but in the sense that it is no longer subject to death.⁵⁴ The new body is freed from all the imperfections that result from sin, but it remains physical and material as it was before.⁵⁵ This is confirmed by the nature of Jesus' resurrected body, which even though it had powers and qualities that transcended his previous body, was undeniably physical in that he could be seen, touched, heard, and was able to handle food and eat it.⁵⁶

The Meaning of the Resurrection of Jesus

The disciples were initially puzzled by both the death and the resurrection of Jesus. However, with the passage of time they came to realize that these two events were decisive for understanding who Jesus is and what he accomplished by his earthly ministry. Careful exegesis of the texts that interpret the resurrection reveal a trajectory in their understanding of these events.

1. *The Resurrection as Revelation.* In Luke-Acts, the death of Jesus was portrayed as a travesty of justice.⁵⁷ It would have been easy for the disciples to draw from this that Jesus' life and death were ordinary and meaningless. However, the resurrection revealed God's reversal of these human verdicts

the material in contrast with the immaterial.

⁵⁴Brunt, 348. According to Krentz, 108, since Christ was clearly raised bodily in the material sense, the resurrection of believers will also be bodily. The "soul-like" body is characterized by the sensual appetite of the original Adam after sin. The resurrection body will be spiritual, but not in an immaterial sense. It is, rather, characterized by the Spirit.

⁵⁵Conzelmann, 283; John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* (n.p.: Harper and Brothers, 1879), 8:1054-1055; Alan G. Padgett, "The Body in Resurrection: Science and Scripture on the 'Spiritual Body' (1 Cor 15:35-58)," *WW* 22/2 (2002): 162.

⁵⁶Bockmuehl, 496, and Wright, 477, used the word "transphysical" to describe the resurrection body.

⁵⁷See Krentz, 100-101. At the end of Jesus' trial, there was no pronouncement of guilt (cf. Luke 22:71 in contrast to Matt 26:65-66 and Mark 14:64). Instead, Pilate pronounces Jesus innocent three times (Luke 23:4, 14, 22) and claims that Herod agrees with that verdict (23:15). One of the criminals crucified with Jesus also testifies to his innocence (23:41), as does the Roman centurion stationed at the cross (23:47). Nevertheless, Pilate gives in to the clamor of the crowd and surrenders Jesus to them (23:23-25). The sermons in Acts underline the point that Jesus was "disowned" and "betrayed" by the Jewish leaders even though many of them knew that God was with him. Nevertheless, they joined with Gentile leadership to kill him unjustly (Acts 2:22-24; 3:13-15; 5:30-31; 7:52-53).

and made the guilt of those who condemned him publically evident.⁵⁸ It was now clear that Jesus' innocence was not only affirmed by earthly authorities, but also by God himself,⁵⁹ and that Jesus had authority and dignity of the highest order.⁶⁰ It is at the resurrection that Jesus is revealed, without question, to be more than a mere man.

2. *Resurrection as Enthronement.* The earliest stages of Christian theological thinking are directly witnessed in the hymns in the letters attributed to Paul.⁶¹ These early hymns emphasize how the resurrection led to the enthronement of Christ.⁶² In Phil 2:6-11, Jesus went so low in his death that his exaltation to the "highest place" seems all the greater.⁶³ In Col 1:18, "the first firstborn of the dead" is now preeminent over all things.⁶⁴ The

⁵⁸Cf. previous note, and Krentz, 100.

⁵⁹The trial of Jesus was a miscarriage of justice that was corrected by God's act of resurrection. This interpretation of the crucifixion and resurrection would have made sense in the Roman world to which Luke was writing. See Krentz, 100; Wolfhart Pannenberg, "A Theology of the Cross," *WW* 8/2 (1988): 170.

⁶⁰Krentz, 100-101, 105-106. Through the resurrection Jesus is revealed as the Jewish Messiah (Acts 2:36; see also Tietjen, 98), who is exalted to the right hand of God (Acts 2:25, 33-36; 5:31; 7:55-56), and who was raised by the creative power of God. In a sense, the resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate act of creation.

⁶¹Col 3:16 describes the early hymns as the "account of the Messiah" (Λογὸς τοῦ χριστοῦ). Hymns in the NT can be detected by a number of features common to ancient standards of song writing. They open with a relative pronoun that has no antecedent. The lines of the hymn may have cadence, parallels in thought and grammatical structure (as in the antithetical datives at the end of each line in 1 Tim 3:16), and sometimes end rhymes. See Krentz, 101. Among the better known early Christian hymns found in the NT are Phil 2:6-11, Col 1:15-20, and 1 Tim 3:16.

⁶²Krentz, 101, notes that 1 Tim 3:16 is formed along the lines of ancient enthronement rituals. There are six lines, each beginning with a verb that rhymes with all the others. Krentz notes in regard to 1 Tim 3:16 that "The first two lines [of the hymnic portion of the verse] assert that the subject is elevated to the status of ruler in heaven and on earth. Lines 3 and 4 describe his public presentation by his appearance in heaven to the angels and his proclamation (in missionary preaching) to the nations of the world. Lines 5 and 6 present the response of those ruled: he is accepted in the universe by faith, he is installed as *Kosmokrator* (Lord of the cosmos) in heaven."

⁶³While the death of Jesus Christ is mentioned in the text, the cross's salvific meaning is not mentioned. The emphasis is, instead, on the voluntary and humble nature of Jesus' human experience (Phil 2:6-8) as the background to his exaltation in vv. 9-11. In some sense, God exalts Jesus to an even higher place than he had before he humbled himself. Phil 2:9-11 is, along with Revelation 5, the clearest description of what the phrase "Jesus is Lord" meant to the early church. The allusion to Isa 45:23 includes Jesus Christ in everything the OT attributes to YHWH.

⁶⁴The "all things" (πάντων) in this text include the entire universe. As the "first born over all creation" (Col 1:15, NIV), the Son is the agent of God, who created all things

impact of Jesus' enthronement was at least twofold in the ancient world:⁶⁵ he brought victory over the spiritual powers⁶⁶ that the ancients feared and which controlled their lives, and he demonstrated the emptiness of the Roman Emperor's claims to be lord and savior over this world.⁶⁷

3. *Resurrection as First Fruits.* The resurrection of Jesus was God's creative act in the power of the Holy Spirit, which now dwells in the believer. Romans 8 asserts that the God who raised Jesus from the dead will also "give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit" (v. 11). The resurrection of Jesus enables a person to live in the Spirit, and the life in the Spirit that the believer now has is an advance payment on the resurrection she will have in the future.⁶⁸ Both the resurrection of Jesus and the advance payment of the Spirit are called "first fruits" in the NT.⁶⁹

Resurrection Power in the Present

The concept of first fruits indicates that the resurrection of Jesus has greater implications than merely a promise of a future bodily life. The power of the resurrection also impacts the believer's present existence.⁷⁰ The resurrection of Jesus is not just another story; it is the underlying reality to which all stories point.⁷¹ In pointing to the ultimate resurrection, Jesus' resurrection changes

and who reconciles all things and who makes peace in the universe (Col 1:15-20).

⁶⁵Besides the hymns in the NT and the "seated at the right hand of God" motif, there are other significant enthronement texts. In Mark 14:61-62, the High Priest asks if Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus' reply combines Dan 7:13-14 (the son of man coming in the clouds) with Ps 110:1ff., which speaks of the enthronement of a king ("sit at my right hand"). Matthew includes the same incident and statement (Matt 26:64), but expands on its significance by describing the death of Jesus as an eschatological event (27:50-53), which brings Jesus into total authority over all creation (28:18-20). See Krentz, 103-104.

⁶⁶"Things visible and things invisible" (Col 1:16). See Krentz, 102.

⁶⁷Ibid., 104-105. Tietjen, 98. The Christian phrase "Jesus is Lord" (Acts 10:36; Phil 2:11) stood in stark contrast to "Caesar is Lord." In 1 Thess 1:9-10, it is the one who was raised from the dead that rescues his people from the wrath that is to come. And in Philippians 3, it is on account of the resurrection of Jesus (3:8-11) that believers can look to him as the "Savior" (another title of the Roman emperor), who is the Lord enthroned in the heavens (3:20).

⁶⁸Krentz, 106.

⁶⁹1 Cor 15:20-23 speaks of the death and resurrection of Jesus as a "first-fruits" of all those who have "fallen asleep." See the section below on 1 Corinthians 15. On the other hand, Rom 8:23 speaks of the believer's experience as a "first fruits" of the Holy Spirit.

⁷⁰Wright, 373.

⁷¹Timothy Keller, *King's Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus* (New York: Dutton, 2011), 228.

everything about the current world.⁷² Romans 6:3-14 proposes that those who die with Christ in baptism are united with him in his resurrection, thereby bringing resurrection power into the present life of the believer. This theme is also found in Eph 2:3-7, where believers are, as it were, raised up into heavenly places in Christ. There is power granted to the believer to live a new life, the power to change, and a new meaning and purpose to existence (2 Cor 5:15).⁷³

This aspect of the resurrection is particularly the focus of the Gospel of John, renowned for its emphasis on realized eschatology.⁷⁴ In John 5:19-29, Jesus contrasts two kinds of resurrection: (1) the eschatological resurrection

⁷² Ibid., 222. Robert H. Smith, "(W)right Thinking on the Resurrection? *Dialogue* 43/3 (2004): 251. The resurrection implies that ordinary life is good and worth preserving. Keller, 222, however, points out that the problem with ordinary life is that it is always going away or falling apart. Death, disease, and violence are hard to take because we think this broken world is the only world we will ever have. But when we realize that this is not the only world, the only body we will ever have, that someday we will have a perfect body and an eternal life, it no longer matters what other people think or what they do to us. You can face the worst that life throws at you with joy and hope. When we see that Jesus has broken the boundaries of death and that his death and resurrection somehow include us all, our perspective on death and tragedy changes. Peace in the midst of the storm is really possible.

I would go even a step further. The same divine power that raised Jesus from the dead is more than sufficient to transform even this life in tangible and miraculous ways. Through the Holy Spirit, resurrection power is unleashed within this age and within this life. As we focus our attention on the death and resurrection of Jesus, the power of the resurrection becomes real in the present. See Jon Paulien, *Meet God Again for the First Time* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2003), 137-159.

⁷³ Brunt, 352. Note Ellen G. White, who states: "The Sadducees held that there would be no resurrection of the body; but Jesus tells them that one of the greatest works of His Father is raising the dead, and that He Himself has power to do the same work (John 5:25). The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead. Christ declares that even now the power which gives life to the dead is among them, and they are to behold its manifestation. This same resurrection power is that which gives life to the soul 'dead in trespasses and sins.' Eph. 2:1. That spirit of life in Christ Jesus, 'the power of His resurrection,' sets men 'free from the law of sin and death.' Phil. 3:10; Rom. 8:2. The dominion of evil is broken, and through faith the soul is kept from sin. He who opens his heart to the Spirit of Christ becomes a partaker of that mighty power which shall bring forth his body from the grave" (*The Desire of Ages* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911], 209-210).

⁷⁴ Jon Paulien, *John: Jesus Gives Life to a New Generation*, Abundant Life Bible Amplifier (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995), 123: "The Gospel of John seems to have little interest in the future end of the world. Instead, it asserts that what others view as a future reality has become a present reality in the work of Christ." This is not to say, however, that John is completely uninterested in future eschatology, as shown in a number of texts that stand in tension with the general emphasis on present eschatology—texts that assert the resurrection of Jesus himself before he ascended to heaven (John 20:19-23) and texts that speak about a future resurrection and universal judgment on the basis of deeds (John 5 and 6).

(“the hour is coming,” in which both righteous and wicked are raised to different fates; John 5:28-29),⁷⁵ and (2) a present, spiritual resurrection (“the hour is coming and now is,” in which eternal life becomes a present reality for those who believe in Jesus; John 5:24-25).⁷⁶ Those living in this present reality are described as having “passed over from death to life (v. 24—present tense).”⁷⁷ While the language is different from Romans 6 or Ephesians 2, the essential meaning is the same.⁷⁸ Faith in God’s power to raise the dead is an important component of life-transforming faith in the present.⁷⁹ The two resurrections are also intertwined in John 6:54: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood *has* eternal life, and I *will raise* him up at the last day.”

*Primary New Testament Resurrection Texts*⁸⁰

John 11:20-27⁸¹

In John 11:25, Jesus proclaims that he is the resurrection and the life before using the resurrection of Lazarus as an acted parable to demonstrate his assertion (vv. 38-45).⁸² At the time of the resurrection, Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. This was proof to the Jewish onlookers that it was a genuine resurrection, because Jews of the time believed that resuscitation of a corpse was only possible up to three days after death.⁸³

This passage demonstrates that the Christian hope transcended the beliefs of Judaism at the time. Martha’s statement in v. 24 that “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day” was in harmony with Jewish

⁷⁵Ernst Haenchen agrees that this passage refers to bodily resurrection at the end of time, but argues that it is a later insertion into the Gospel intended to correct the absence of such a perspective in the Gospel actually written by John. He believes the original author of the Gospel had no concept of a future bodily resurrection (*John 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1–6*, trans. Robert W. Funk, Hermeneia [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984], 253-254).

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 252.

⁷⁷Paulien, *John* 120-122.

⁷⁸Brunt, 354. Oepke, 1:371, argues that in Romans 6 the resurrection is already a present possession for believers, although the future resurrection is the primary emphasis in Paul.

⁷⁹Brunt, 357. Notice the interplay between the two in Hebrews 11.

⁸⁰For a review of the resurrection texts in the book of Revelation, see Beate Kowalski, “Martyrdom and Resurrection in the Revelation to John,” *AUSS* 41 (2003): 55-64.

⁸¹For more detail on this passage, see Paulien, *John*, 186-187.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 89-90.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 185.

belief.⁸⁴ However, Jesus had something more to reveal to her: he himself was the basis of her hope in the resurrection. Resurrection, then, is more than a future event; it is a living hope made real through the personal presence of Jesus,⁸⁵ whose living presence renders the present kind of death as of no consequence.⁸⁶

This explains Jesus' statement in John 11:26, in which he says that those who believe in him will never die.⁸⁷ However, believers die all the time. Did Jesus mean that the body dies, but the soul continues to live in Christ? The dialogue between Jesus and his disciples in John 11:11-16 becomes instructive. For Jesus, the death that believers die is not really death; it is only temporary, like sleep is (vv. 11-14). Though believers may sleep like Lazarus, they will never die in the ultimate sense. Death need not be feared any longer. Believers may sleep, but they will never die.

1 Corinthians 15:12-26

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul begins by affirming that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is of first importance to the gospel (vv. 1-4).⁸⁸ His language

⁸⁴Ernst Haechen, *John 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 7-21*, trans. Robert W. Funk with Ulrich Busse, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984), 62.

⁸⁵Brunt, 354. In the Gospel of John, the evangelist goes to great pains to show that the second generation of Christians, who had never experienced the physical presence of Jesus, were at no disadvantage in comparison with those who had. In John, the miracles of Jesus did not require his physical presence. Water turned to wine in another part of the house from where Jesus was. The nobleman's son was healed 16 miles away. Jesus does not offer the paralytic his hand; the man gets up on his own. The blind man is healed at the Pool of Siloam, 1,200 yards from the place where Jesus spoke to him. Jesus does not touch Lazarus, but calls to him. In this way, the Gospel shows that Jesus' word is as good as his presence. Through the Holy Spirit, believers have as much access to Jesus' miraculous resurrection power as those who experienced his physical presence. See Paulien, *John*, 19-23; Brunt, 355.

⁸⁶Brunt, 354-355.

⁸⁷Ibid., 355.

⁸⁸Kirk R. MacGregor, "1 Corinthians 15:3B-6A, 7 and the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus," *JETS* 49 (2006): 225-234. MacGregor affirms the above in his interaction with scholars who believe that 1 Cor 15:3-7 affirms a spiritual rather than bodily resurrection for Jesus. 1 Cor 15:11 (ESV) summarizes the earlier verses with "so we preach and so you believed." The key to the gospel is four lines in vv. 3-5, each beginning with "that" (ὅτι), which express the following: Christ died, he was buried, he was raised, and he appeared. The first and third lines are accompanied by "according to the Scriptures," so they seem to be the key concepts. The fact that he was buried (l. 2) proves that he actually died. The fact that he appeared to many (l. 4) proves that he was raised. So the key assertions of this passage are that Jesus died (l. 1) and that he was raised from the dead (l. 3). This is the essence of the gospel and no one can

clearly indicates that he is speaking of a bodily resurrection after a burial.⁸⁹ Then in v. 12, he comes to his main point: some individuals related to the Corinthian church had stated that there is no resurrection of the dead.⁹⁰ Paul's response makes clear that Christian faith is an integral package that includes both Christ's and the believer's resurrections and that the two resurrections are of the same kind.⁹¹ If any part of the process is removed, all is lost;⁹² without the resurrection, preaching is in vain (v. 14), faith is futile, and we are all still in our sins (v. 17). Any other view of things fails to reach beyond this world (vv. 18-19).⁹³

In v. 20, Paul asserts unequivocally that Jesus was, in fact, raised from the dead. This was not a solitary act, but was bound up with the believers' hopes for the resurrection. Christ is the first fruits, so his resurrection is the assurance of more resurrections to come (vv. 22-23). As such, he is the counterpart of Adam (15:22) and his actions affect the whole human race.⁹⁴ Christ's resurrection involves a victory not only over death, but over every power and authority that troubles life here on earth (vv. 25-27).⁹⁵ The resurrections of Jesus and the believer are tied together theologically.⁹⁶

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

Although the Greek words typically used for "resurrection" do not appear in 2 Cor 5:1-10, this passage is clearly relevant for the purpose of this article.⁹⁷

rightly understand the death and resurrection of Jesus unless one uses the Hebrew Scriptures to interpret them (Krentz, 107). The essence of the gospel is the death and resurrection of Jesus.

⁸⁹Wright, 317-329.

⁹⁰It is impossible to say exactly what motivated this kind of thinking. It is possible that the Corinthians were influenced by an early type of Gnostic thinking. See Brunt, 350.

⁹¹Conzelmann, 265; Wright, 332.

⁹²Brunt, 350.

⁹³Conzelmann, 266. And it is clear in 1 Corinthians 15 that Paul has bodily resurrection in mind and not just any kind of postmortem existence. See Jerry L. Sumney, "Post-Mortem Existence and Resurrection of the Body in Paul," *HBT* 31 (2009): 13-16.

⁹⁴Krentz, 108.

⁹⁵Sidney Greidanus detects an allusion to Gen 3:15 in v. 25. This would extend the reference to Adam typology ("Preaching Christ from the Narrative of the Fall," *BSac* 161 [July-September 2004]: 264).

⁹⁶Brunt, 351.

⁹⁷Marvin Pate sees this passage as relevant not only for the issue of resurrection, but also with relation to Adam Christology (cf. Scott Hafemann, "Review of C. Marvin Pate, *Adam Christology as the Exegetical and Theological Substructure of 2 Corinthians*

As with John 11:20-27, it is possible to infer that Paul is here supporting the idea of the immortality of the soul. For example, he refers to the body as an earthly tent. He also speaks about being “away from the Lord” in the present body (2 Cor 5:6) and of the future presence with the Lord as being “away from the body” as if the body were something that could be lightly discarded (2 Cor 5:8). However, there are a number of problems with drawing such a conclusion.

First, Paul speaks nowhere of a soul or of any existence distinct from the body. There is no hint of a division of humans into two parts.⁹⁸ He speaks of the earthly tent as being destroyed rather than separated from the soul. If the intermediate state was a conscious existence of the soul with Christ, why would he reject such a condition?⁹⁹ He does not desire a state of “nakedness,” an allusion to the removal of the earthly bodily tent; he wishes to be further clothed, a process that will occur at the resurrection, a point that becomes clear in 2 Cor 5:15.¹⁰⁰ Here Paul’s language echoes his statements in the latter part of 1 Corinthians 15: mortality gives way to immortality only at the return of Christ.¹⁰¹ Thus the “heavenly building” of 2 Cor 5:4-5 must refer to the believer’s glorious resurrection body, which replaces the mortal “earthly tent” at the parousia.¹⁰² Paul’s focus in 2 Corinthians 5 is not an intermediate state for part of his person, but the ultimate fate of his person as an embodied whole. Unlike his “earthly tent,” his future body will be eternal.¹⁰³

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The earliest reference to the resurrection of Jesus in the NT is probably the one in 1 Thess 4:13-14.¹⁰⁴ It seems the Thessalonian believers were ignorant

4:7–5:21 [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991], in *JBL* 113/2 [1994]: 346-347).

⁹⁸H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Christian Doctrine of Man*, 3d ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1934).

⁹⁹Sumney, 21-23.

¹⁰⁰In 2 Cor 5:15, the language of resurrection is clearly used (τῷ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἀποθανόντι καὶ ἐγερθέντι).

¹⁰¹Brunt, 351-352; Wright, 364.

¹⁰²Pate, 121, as summarized in Hafemann, 347.

¹⁰³Calvin J. Roetzel, “As Dying and Behold We Live: Death and Resurrection in Paul’s Theology,” *Int* 46/1 (1992): 15. Eschatological expectations frame the entire letter of 1 Thessalonians (1:10; 5:10, 23). See Edith M. Humphrey, “Which Way is Up? Revival, Resurrection, Assumption, and Ascension in the Rhetoric of Paul and John the Seer,” *ARC* 33 (2005): 331-332.

¹⁰⁴Leclerc, 101. On 1 Thessalonians as the first NT book to be written, see D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New*

regarding the fate of loved ones who had died since they were converted (4:13).¹⁰⁵ In v. 14, Paul seeks to solve that problem by drawing a parallel between the death and resurrection of Jesus and the death and resurrection of the believer.¹⁰⁶ If Jesus was raised from dead, those who believe in him will also be raised.¹⁰⁷ Paul does not say that the deceased ones are conscious, or in some sense alive.¹⁰⁸ Instead, he says that they are “asleep” and will remain so until the resurrection of the dead when Christ will return (vv. 15-16).¹⁰⁹ There is a future hope for the dead, along with those who are alive when Jesus comes.

But what does Paul mean when he says that God will “bring with him” those who have fallen asleep (v. 14)?¹¹⁰ Some read this as saying that those who have died in Christ (and supposedly went to heaven at death) will return with Jesus when he comes. But this interpretation contradicts Paul’s own teaching that the resurrection of dead believers occurs at the second coming, not before.¹¹¹ In v. 14, Paul is not saying that God “brings” the dead Christians down to earth when Jesus comes; instead, he “brings” them back up from the ground “through Jesus!”¹¹²

Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 293-294, 347-348; Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 309; Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. 2, *History and Literature of Early Christianity*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 112; Werner George Kuemmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, rev. ed., trans. Howard Clark Kee (Nashville; Abingdon, 1975), 257-260; Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 32 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 75. The passage in 1 Thessalonians 4 is closely paralleled in Paul’s later statement in 1 Cor 15:23. See Wright, 337.

¹⁰⁵Malherbe, 264. After looking at several options in the literature, P.H.E. van Houwelingen suggests that the Thessalonians lack of familiarity with the idea of bodily resurrection led them to misunderstand Paul’s initial teaching (“The Great Reunion: The Meaning and Significance of the ‘Word of the Lord’ in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 42 [2007]: 311-312).

¹⁰⁶Van Houwelingen, 313, notes that “The resurrection of the dead is anchored in the resurrection of Jesus”; see also p. 317.

¹⁰⁷Humphrey, 333; Malherbe, 266.

¹⁰⁸Brunt, 349.

¹⁰⁹Sleep, of course, was a widespread ancient euphemism for death. See F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, WBC 45 (Waco: Word, 1982), 95; van Houwelingen, 310.

¹¹⁰The Greek word for “bring” (ἄγω) can also mean “take.” The only way to translate it correctly is by observing the context. See BAGD, 16-17.

¹¹¹Robert Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 94-96.

¹¹²Humphrey, 332-333.

This fits the earlier model found in the Gospels. Jesus rose from the dead, then ascended to heaven. It was not the other way around. So it is with the believer, who is raised from the dead and only then carried up to heaven to be “with the Lord.”¹¹³ If people went to heaven when they died, they would not need to ascend at the second coming.

If Paul taught the Thessalonians that the dead believers were already in heaven, why were those who remained grieving like those who had no hope?¹¹⁴ If the problem was their ignorance of that fact, why didn’t Paul correct their misconceptions? However, Paul clearly did not believe that the saints go to heaven when they die. Instead, he comforted the Thessalonians by telling them that when Jesus comes, they will be reunited with those they have loved.¹¹⁵

*Practical Implications of the Biblical
Doctrine of Resurrection*

The concluding question that should preoccupy all theological efforts to understand the NT meaning of the resurrection is, *What difference does it make?* What are some practical implications of the Bible’s teaching on this subject?

¹¹³I am well aware of the debate concerning the implications of ἀπάντησιν (1 Thess 4:17) for the direction in which believers are taken after they meet the Lord in the air. Many scholars are confident that ἀπάντησιν is a technical term for a festal procession in which people leave a city to escort a dignitary back to the city. See James E. Frame, *The Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians*, ICC, ed. Samuel Rolles Driver, Alfred Plummer, and Charles Augustus Briggs (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), 176-177 (while Frame may be the first scholar to mention the possibility of a technical usage, he still argues that the resurrected believers go on to heaven after they meet Jesus in the air); Erik Peterson, “Die Einholung des Kyrios,” *ZST* 1 (1930): 682-702; idem, ἀπάντησις, *TDNT* 1:380-381; Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NICNT, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 146; Wright, 217-218. But it seems to me that this view is leaning too heavily on a supposed technical meaning that is far from established and goes against the grain of Paul’s argument as summarized in the main text above. For a good recent summary of the issues, see Michael R. Cosby, “Hellenistic Formal Receptions and Paul’s Use of ΑΠΑΝΤΗΣΙΣ in 1 Thessalonians 4:17,” *BBR* 4 (1994): 15-34; the response in Robert H. Gundry, “A Brief Note on ‘Hellenistic Formal Receptions and Paul’s Use of ΑΠΑΝΤΗΣΙΣ in 1 Thessalonians 4:17,’” *BBR* 6 (1996): 38-41; and Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, AB 32B, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 277.

¹¹⁴Sumney, 20, points out that Paul comforts the Thessalonians with a resurrection at the second coming; however, he makes no mention of an intermediate state. The passage refers to an extinction, which is followed by a re-creation, of those who died.

¹¹⁵The Thessalonians had feared that at the second coming the living would leave the dead behind. See van Houwelingen, 312, 324.

How does the study of the resurrection make believers better persons than they would be otherwise? I here turn to some practical implications of the biblical doctrine of the resurrection.

Community

It should not surprise us if one of the most powerful implications of the resurrection has to do with the restoration of God's people as a community. People die one at a time, in the process being separated from their community. According to the belief in the immortality of the soul, individualism continues in the afterlife. Believers go to heaven one by one after death, in isolation from their earthly community. This teaching fits well with Western individualism. However, the writers of the Bible could not conceive of fellowship with God apart from community.¹¹⁶ Christ is the head of the body, and partnership with him includes fellowship with the community of believers.

The doctrine of resurrection underlies the corporate nature of biblical thought. As John Brunt notes, "This corporate nature of participation with Christ is much clearer when the NT concept of resurrection, as opposed to the notion of the immortality of the soul, is understood. It means that all receive the final reward together as community."¹¹⁷ According to Hebrews 11, the great saints of the OT have not yet received their final reward, but "God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect" (Heb 11:40).

The resurrection from death consequently is not individualistic, but involves the restoration of the whole community.¹¹⁸ The righteous dead all rise up together, and those who are alive receive translation at the same time. People die individually, but the righteous rise up together¹¹⁹ and "enjoy the blessings of eternity together."¹²⁰ Thus true and full community in eternity requires that the resurrection come first, and the purpose of the resurrection is to restore the community.

¹¹⁶Brunt, 363.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Lucas, 303-304. In the word of John Goldingay, resurrection "happens to individuals, but it does not happen to them individually. . . . [I]t is not the means of them enjoying individual bliss, but of them having a share in the new life and glory of the people of God" (*Daniel*, WBC [Dallas: Word, 1989], 318).

¹¹⁹In 1 Thess 4:17, the key theme is "togetherness." The dead are raised to rejoin the living believers. And they rise up into the air together to meet Jesus there. It is only then that they are "together with the Lord."

¹²⁰Sakae Kubo, *God Meets Man: A Theology of the Sabbath and Second Advent* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1978), 136.

Attitude toward Life and Death

The doctrine of resurrection affects the believer's attitude toward life *and* death. Immortality of the soul scorns the value of the human body and the physical world and seeks something better in the absence of the flesh. In the process, there is a subtle pride. If immortality is something I possess inherently, then I have significance in my own right. Resurrection, on the other hand, puts all significance in the capacity of God to re-create a person from inanimate material. In other words, resurrection puts the focus on God, while immortality puts the focus on humans.¹²¹ Therefore, while resurrection affirms the humble status of human beings in relation to God, it also affirms the goodness and importance of the present created order. God does not abandon his creation; rather, the substance of hope lies with creation, not beyond it.¹²² In simpler terms, according to the Scriptures, physical life is good.¹²³

Believers nourished in the biblical worldview, therefore, have a realistic attitude toward life and work in the present world. Some Christians, looking forward to the future world, become apathetic about this one; however, the life-affirming nature of the resurrection hope compels us to work for the good of others in the here and now.¹²⁴ But this tension between the now and the not yet also provides a strong dose of realism. The believer's work in the present is a participation in God's work, but it is also an anticipation of God's ultimate work, which helps the believers to keep from making an idol out of one's efforts to bless and to heal in this life. Because God will raise up the believer at the resurrection, he can take risks for the sake of others in this life, knowing that the believer's work is not ultimate. Life is a gift to be embraced and valued, but not at the cost of eternity.¹²⁵

The doctrine of the resurrection also gives believers a realistic attitude toward death. If bodily life is valuable, humans will promote life and fight against death. Death is not a friend. It is not a natural part of life or a rite of passage. Rather, it is an enemy; but due to the life, death, and resurrection of Christ it is a defeated enemy! Believers can then fight death with confidence, because they know that its victories are temporary and ultimately it will not prevail. The enemy we fight wins many battles, but it is destined to lose the war.¹²⁶

¹²¹Brueggemann, 33.

¹²²Wright, 86-87. White, 804, states that the resurrection body will be recognizable, affirming the value of the present body and of human activity in this life.

¹²³Brunt, 364.

¹²⁴Ibid., 364-365.

¹²⁵Ibid., 365.

¹²⁶Ibid., 364.

Immortality and Human Nature

The biblical doctrine of the resurrection has significant implications for the doctrine of human nature and the way human beings can attain to immortality. The creation account proposes that human life is derived from God.¹²⁷ Immortality is not innate to humanity, but is a gift from God,¹²⁸ sustained in the original context by access to the Tree of Life (Gen 2:9, 22-23) and conditional upon obedience to God (Gen 2:16-17).¹²⁹ Resurrection of the body is not a natural transition from one state to another. Instead, it is nothing less than a miracle in which God re-creates that which has ceased to exist,¹³⁰ a miracle that occurs at the second coming of Jesus Christ, and at which time mortality is swallowed up by immortality and death is swallowed up by victory (1 Cor 15:51-54).¹³¹ Teachings such as the immortality of the soul or reincarnation deny the finality of death as something that occurs apart from God's re-creative power.

Bodily resurrection is also grounded in the organic unity of human nature.¹³² There is no consciousness in the absence of a body. At the same time, death is not total annihilation. It is described as a sleep, a state of temporary unconsciousness in which a person awaits the resurrection.¹³³ Belief that the dead are somehow conscious apart from the body prepares Christians to accept spiritualism. So the bodily nature of resurrection is an important safeguard against a misreading of spiritual experiences.¹³⁴

¹²⁷Gen 1:26-28; Acts 17:25; Col 1:16-17.

¹²⁸Damsteegt, 350.

¹²⁹Brueggemann, 33.

¹³⁰Ibid.; Brunt, 364.

¹³¹Damsteegt, 351.

¹³²Ibid., 352-353; I. Howard Marshall, "Being Human: Made in the Image of God," *Stone-Campbell Journal* 4 (2001): 61. The soul is not separate from the body or able to exist apart from it. According to Gen 2:7, the soul is the entire person, made up of a physical body imbued with a breath or life principle from God. At death, the physical body returns to the ground (Gen 3:19) and the life principle returns back to its source (Ps 146:4). The soul has no conscious existence apart from the body, and there is no biblical text that unequivocally suggests that at death the soul or spirit survives as a conscious entity; the contrary is the case (Ezek 18:20; Matt 10:28). At death there is no difference between human and animal (Eccl 3:19-21). Wright, 373, describes the "life principle" as the dead "are safe in the mind, plan and intention of the creator God."

¹³³Damsteegt, 352.

¹³⁴Ibid., 354. Wright, 108-109, pays significant attention to the idea of an intermediate state. Since resurrection comes at some distance from death in most cases, it raises the question as to what occurs between the moment of death and the moment of resurrection, or, as he puts it, the resurrection is "bodily life after life after death." The one does not immediately follow the other. While Wright is not clear on the unconsciousness of the intermediate state, he is clear that this gap in time implies

Conclusion

The NT writers accepted the standard Jewish view of their time with one major exception. They saw in the resurrection of Jesus a first fruit or down payment on the resurrection of the whole human race at the end of time. Just as Jesus died and rose again, so also everyone who believes in Jesus will rise to immortal bodily life at the second coming. But prior to this, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the power of Jesus' resurrection begins to be exercised in the living experience of those who believe in Jesus. Through this resurrection power, believers can not only experience God's acceptance, but can also be freed from the addictive power of sin and begin to live the kind of life they will experience in eternity.

that there is no immediate "resurrection to heaven." The full resurrection comes at the end, and the dead wait in their graves until that moment.

See also his summary comments (*ibid.*, 203). According to him, between death and resurrection, humans are in a "post-mortem existence." This is not an immortal soul in the Platonic sense. Rather, he proposes that belief in YHWH as the Creator is a sufficient explanation for the dead being held in some kind of continuing existence by divine power rather than in virtue of something inherent to their own nature. His language is not far from the idea that in death the "life-principle" (Damsteegt, 353) is held in the mind and heart of God, awaiting the day when God re-creates the body out of nothing in a form that is recognizably similar to what was before. Such an idea builds on the biblical concept of unconsciousness in death, yet retains the significance of the intermediate state.